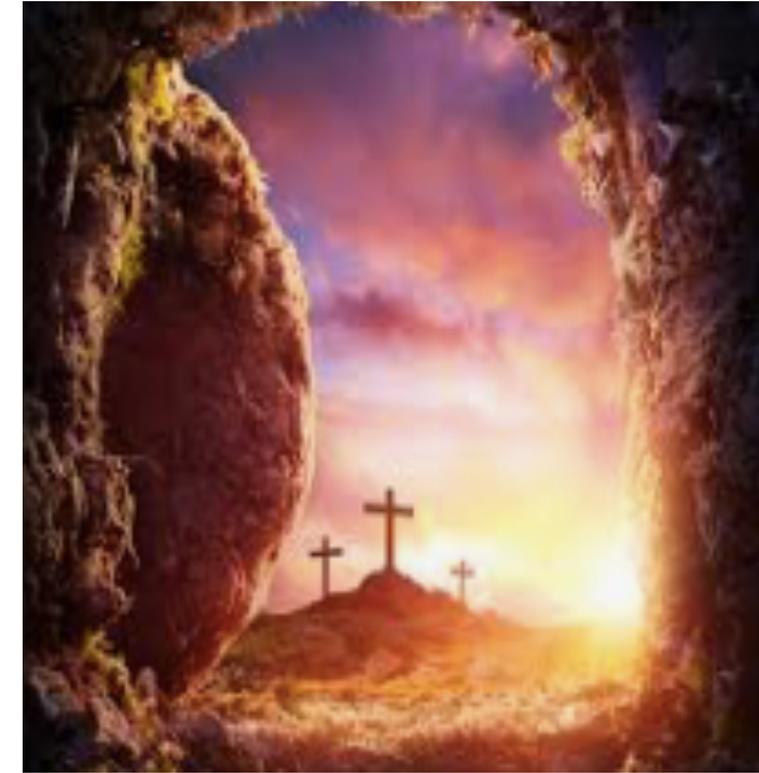


Gospel of Matthew  
27:57~ 28:10

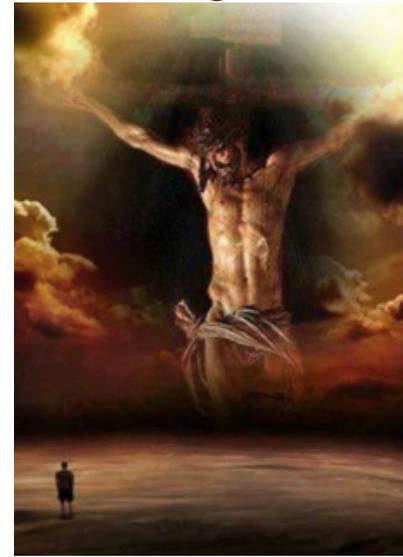
*A Brave Man; An Angel; the Women; and Me*



What a day to celebrate! This is a day when we can particularly cherish the joy of knowing our Creator personally! We know Him as the ever-living one who has power even over death! Death seems to be the most powerful part of life on earth! We know death as an inexorable end-of-life event in each and every life on earth! From the moment of conception, every person's life is winding down to the day when our enemy, Death, steals that life-force – our soul – the original breath of God - from our body! But the resurrection of Jesus paints a much brighter picture! It is a picture of life being taken back from Death! Only the the Originator of life, the Creator of life - could pull off such a heist! And the apostles teaching informs us that God's end game is to give all of Christ's followers their own resurrection! God will one day defeat death **in us**, and life will again course through the veins of our *new* bodies - eternal life – immortality - not leaving any part of us for Death to possess! That is the good news of the gospel. Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection - an event unmatched in it's power and glory! ***But we who love Him are next! We, my friends,*** are the full harvest of God!



So if you have been with us this entire time -103 messages in Matthew, 2 years, and counting - there are things about Matthew that you have learned that you will carry with you for the rest of your life! Remember, it is our personal acquaintance with the scriptures/ the written word that fills us with the knowledge of God and makes us wise! Not so that we can be proud – God forbid – but so that we can on the one hand be protected by the truth, and on the other hand be motivated by the truth to enter into the the purposes of God for our lives! This body of knowledge is good for **defense offense!** So, in Matthew we have learned that from the birth of Jesus in chapter one, and then all the amazing events and teachings of Christ contained in the main body of the book of Matthew - it was all leading to the crucifixion where Jesus paid a price big enough to wipe out the sins of the world from the judicial memory of God – the price of His life!



The cross is the apex of Christianity – both its lowest and highest point! Christ sufferings on His cross makes us cry – it makes us fall to our knees and weep in sorrow/grief, not only for His sufferings, but for who we are as weak, duplicitous, double-minded human beings! He was up there suffering on the cross ***because of us – because of me!*** But then it makes us laugh with joy, because it demonstrates a height, and depth, and a width of love from our Creator that is far beyond reason – beyond comprehension! The fact that men did it is symbolic of the depths of the human depravity that put Him up there. But ***He*** put ***Himself*** up there! Men did not do it! ***He did it*** by using the evil in men’s hearts to see that it got done! So men were responsible for their own actions – and they were held accountable for what they did - but ultimately, God designed this, and working with the evil in men’s hearts, saw to it that it was accomplished! When Jesus uttered His last anguished cry “***It is finished!***”, ***THIS*** is what He was referring to! The plan was completed! When He was born He had an appointment to keep with the cross, and with Death! His priceless life was given over to Death in an extravagant payment! It was a big enough event, and expensive enough price to ***eradicate the sins of the world!*** Now, it ***DIDN’T*** – it ***didn’t*** eradicate the sins of the world. It was big enough to, but it didn’t! But it has eradicated the sins of ***every sinner who has requested of God*** that the antidote of the cross be applied to their sins, and who have given themselves exclusively to Jesus!

The infectious disease of sin has us. And we will definitely die a painful death from it, for the wages of sin is death. The book of Revelation, last book of the Bible makes it clear that if we die without having taken God's antidote, Jesus, we will suffer a second death in the hereafter – not the end of existence, but the beginning of suffering. We needed an antidote, a vaccine to save us and God gave it to us in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ! He died so we wouldn't have to suffer a second death!



So the story *always* ends when the hero dies. But, of course, that is not the end of **the gospel story!** *This* story does not end when the hero dies! The gospel is unique that way! It never ends! It is still being revealed in the lives of the followers of Jesus even today! The Gospel of Mathew, and the other gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Christ however does end when the dead hero of the story comes back to life again, and the story continues, showing Him be revealing Himself as a living, breathing, walking, talking, *eating*, human being to all His followers/disciples! No one who was with Him at the time seemed to have been listening or actually comprehending what He was saying. His words claiming that He would die by crucifixion and then, a few days later rise from His grave to live again, well - those words seemed so “out there”, so strange, that it was thought by His disciples to be just another of the bizarre and statements of Jesus! No one knew exactly what He meant by it, so they tended to set it aside, like *many* of the peculiar and puzzling things Jesus said. Maybe His meaning would become clearer later, they thought. Then toward the end, it seems they figured out that when Jesus talked about His soon-to-be death by crucifixion, ***He meant His actual death by crucifixion!*** But when He spoke of coming back to life again, they didn't get that! How could they? It had not been done before! No one could take their life back from death once the old specter had it! And after His death and entombment, they really weren't looking for Him to rise from the dead!<sup>4</sup>

One of the disciples of Jesus – not one of the twelve, but a disciple none-the-less, a secret one - who is named in the story as **Joseph of Arimathea** – a wealthy man - he had more courage than any of the other disciples! Luke says he was a member of the council – the Sanhedrin – and that he had not agreed with their decision to use the Romans to kill Jesus. So this brave man went against his peers, who John says he “*feared*”, and approached the Roman governor, Pilot, and asked for the body of Jesus. And, the governor had no use for a dead body, plus, being used to corruption, he none-the-less had a troubled conscience over the corrupt affair, so he was more than willing to give the body to Joseph of Arimathea.

Joseph, couldn't have handled the body alone. John's gospel adds that he was accompanied by **Nicodemus** – another member of the Sanhedrin and another secret disciple of Jesus within that body. So together they carried Jesus' body and tenderly placed it in Joseph's own tomb. It was a rich man's tomb. He had paid for it to be hewn out of rock – a man-made cave of sorts, likely with rock benches chiseled out of the walls to lay the body or bodies upon. It is likely that it was laboriously constructed to serve as a family mausoleum for Joseph *and* his family. Obviously he and his family would have honored to have been laid to rest with the body of Jesus! **John's gospel** says that Joseph and Nicodemus also applied burial herbs and spices to the body (75# worth) and **Matthew** records that they wrapped the body in a clean linen burial cloth. They also rolled a large stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. There are women there, watching. Perhaps keeping their distance because Joseph and Nicodemus were known Sanhedrin members! It names Mary Magdalene and the “other Mary”. There were most likely other women there also. **Lk. 23:49** mentions “*all the women that had followed Jesus down from Galilee*”. So they continued hanging around (**Lk. 23:55**). I suppose they were consoling each other, and acting as observers after Jesus died. They did not want His body stolen by the authorities or desecrated. For some reason the gospel writers tended to limit telling the actual number of women disciples who were present, both that night and Sunday morning, but if all the different gospel records are taken into account, there seemed to be a **group** of women disciples that were hanging out around the tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Mary the mother of Jesus, Joanna, and “the others with them”. Mark names “Salome” as being there.

Then up marched some **soldiers**. They had been placed on guard by the priest, who suspected that the disciples would try to steal the body away and claim He had resurrected! They even placed an official seal on the stone that could not be broken without dire legal consequences! The Jewish authorities wanted to make sure that Jesus *stayed dead and stayed in His tomb!* It never dawned on them that Jesus, “*the deceiver*”, could or would ACTUALLY come back to life!



Sunday morning, then, began with an earthquake! Nothing serious, but the earth trembled! It happened because there was a disturbance in the veil that separated the heavenly and earthly realms. An angel came through the barrier! His appearance shook the ground in that area! He was dressed all in white and He was brilliantly lit up – “*like lightning*” Matthew says. The guards were so traumatized that they passed out! The Gospel of Luke, chap. 24 says there were actually *two angels* there, dressed in white, gleaming like lightning! That seems like a hard detail to get wrong. Again, for some reason Mark and Matthew leave out that detail. What seems important to them was *the message* that the angel delivered! The message was a reminder that Jesus had explicitly told them He would be coming back from the grave! It would be the greatest act of God’s power that the earth had ever known! **THEN** the women remembered His words! They ran back to tell the 11! On the way they ran into Jesus and He is indeed **VERY** alive! Suddenly He is there in front of them and they worshipped Him! He gave them a message for His disciples to meet Him in back in Galilee where most of them were from – about 60 miles away. They go and tell the 11 disciples but, unbelievably, are not believed!! This is a very depressed and frightened group of men! However, Peter and John race for the tomb! They have to see for themselves! John says in his Gospel that he actually outran Peter and got to the tomb first and saw that it was empty! It began to dawn on them that something was afoot! Their thoughts went from who could have stolen the body to the report of the women claiming to have seen Jesus alive! Their minds and emotions were racing! Could it possibly be?! They soon found out that it could, and these clinically depressed and defeated men recovered their equilibrium and went on to give their life energies to a risen Savior!



Listen, beside being happy about serving a living and all-powerful God – far more powerful than the seemingly all-powerful Death, we need to celebrate that He has shared His resurrected life with us in this life as well as the next!



**[1 Pet. 1:3-9]** Springtime is all about new life. We see the greening of the grass and our hearts are made glad. We hear the loud mating calls of the birds and we are charmed! Life is a beautiful thing especially to those who have an appointment with death! But there is also a call from your Creator, the God of Life, to come to ***The Life!*** Jesus said in **John 11:25,26** - “***I am the resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though they die, yet shall they live!***” May you answer the call from the God of Life, the God of the resurrection who defeated death in His Son. May you request and receive the antidote to death and the 2<sup>nd</sup> death – the life-giver – the Lord Jesus Christ! May He live in you by the Spirit of God who is promised to indwell every believer! And may you be born into, and live, a new life – a life in which you take possession of the life that God has always intended for you!

As the angel delivered His message from God, saying “***Now I have told you***”, so I also have delivered my message from God. Receive it with a soft and receptive heart! Choose life over death! Choose Jesus!